



# Summer 2019 Newsletter

A quote to start us off:

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

— Margaret Mead

## Upcoming Events

**Sept 14/15:** VTF&WCG booth at VT Trapper's Association Rendezvous in Barton- stop by and say hello!

**Sept 28:** Silvio O. Conte NWR Bridge Redocking Project- meet at 9a.m. at Headquarters Building

**Oct 10-13:** Hunter Ed and Learn to Hunt @ NorthWoods

**Oct 18:** Game Processing Seminar 530pm at NorthWoods Stewardship Center

## F&W BOARD REPORT

by Mike Kolsun, F&W Board Representative, Essex County

Last month's F&W Board meeting was held at Montpelier High School, due to the large turnout anticipated for the coyote season request. Public comments were limited to two minutes, with over 50 people speaking, most of them in favor of regulations on harvesting coyotes. This took over two hours of time, beyond an already busy agenda of votes on 2020 regulation changes. The Vermont Law School coyote proposal was ultimately rejected by the board.

The 2020 regulation changes that were proposed by F&W biologists passed this most recent event. Separate from the regulations, the antlerless proposal for 2019 Muzzleloader season also passed.

For more details, you can access the 99-page report on the F&W website. I'd suggest a FULL pot of coffee and a comfortable sofa for a long reading season.

## RESULTS OF OUR FIRST ANNUAL SPRING SMELT RUN SURVEY.

by Conrad Fortin, Projects Committee Working with Pete Emerson, District 5 fish biologist, during the month of May the group took on a project of surveying area streams during the annual spring smelt spawning migration. The object was to

try and catalog which streams on which lakes had good runs and which didn't. The lakes that we surveyed were Big Averill, Little Averill, Island Pond, Seymour, Salem, and Willoughby. It was a data collection project which basically means that the information is important whether it is good or bad. Several of us spent the month of May checking these streams looking for evidence of any Smelt or smelt eggs including streams that we have witnessed strong runs in the past. The results, from an angler's perspective, were poor at best, but the data collected will hopefully be valuable in determining what exactly is going on and how the Dept. plans to deal with it.

This was only the first of what we hope is an ongoing annual survey project and we were pleased that the District 5 biologists Pete Emerson and Judd Kratzer have approached the VTFWCG for assistance and have shown a willingness to work with us on this and other resource conservation projects. With their knowledge and our boots on the ground good things just might happen.

The results of this survey will be posted on our web site sometime in the near future.

## President's Message- The View from Here

by Matt Breton

I sat quietly in my canoe last night, letting the adrenaline rush ease itself out of my system. The chunky 18" brown trout I had been connected to for an hour, or more realistically, five minutes, had felt like lightning when he took the fly on the surface. The thunder came in the form of the vibrations in my leader- I could feel it stretching. I prayed that my knots were tied well enough as the line sang. After finally netting and releasing him, I took a moment to look around.

My eyes shifted from the nearby water, to the empty shore and finally along the ridge line in the distance. None of this, none, was here for me to enjoy by accident. People stepped up 30, 50, 100 years ago to save these places, protect these waters, to save my ability to hunt and fish.





A century from now, I hope someone, maybe your great-granddaughter and her family, can paddle a canoe out to catch a trout to eat and stare at these same mountains. It isn't going to happen by accident.

There are people interested in stopping hunting right now. There are people who would be happy to silt up streams, to lay waste to our woods and water, in an effort to line their pockets.

Brook trout rearing. Dock installations. Streambank restoration. Smelt survey. Winter deer yard survey. Hunter Ed and Learn to Hunt programs. What do these things have in common? They are all opportunities we work to provide through the Conservation Group to have an impact on our traditional heritage, to leave something for future generations. We 30, 40, 50-year-old hunters and anglers have had it pretty good for a long time and we haven't yet done our part. It is time to get involved, to spend some time giving back. Recruit a member, come to an event, make it happen so that we leave something for generations to come. (Contact me if you want to be more involved or have any questions: [mattbreton@gmail.com](mailto:mattbreton@gmail.com))

### **Hatchery Update- July 2019**

By Peter Engels, Director

Our hatchery received 100,000 brook trout eggs from the Roxbury hatchery in early December, 2018. The eggs hatched in early January; placed in the tanks and monitored daily. Our hatchery monitors check each day for dead fish, signs of disease, water temperature and oxygen level.

Stocking began on 4/13/2019 and was complete on 4/27. 183 bags of fish were dispensed, containing approximately 513 fish per bag. The total number of fish stocked was 93,919, so our survival rate was about 94 percent. Total hours expended in caring for the fish was 182.45; seven volunteers worked at the hatchery this year. One final note: This was the final year that we raised fertile fish; starting next year, all brook and rainbow trout stocked in Vermont will be sterile.

### **Summer 2019 Member Newsletter** **For the Love of Working**

#### **Dogs: On the Run with** **Vermont Bear Houndsmen**

By Molly Cook, Director



My husband, fellow Board member Mike Kolsun, and I had the pleasure of getting out with Bennie Curtis, of Evansville, and Andy Rowell, of Glover, and their team of Treeing Walker hounds.

We met them at 6 am and drove to Wenlock and down South America Pond Rd. After just a couple of miles, the "truck blew up", as they call it, with all their hounds barking and baying, and we were on. The houndsmen let 5 of their 9 dogs out of their boxes and they were off at a run.

Each is fitted with a GPS collar and Bennie and Andy started tracking them on the screen. The sound of these dogs baying was exciting — they were doing what they loved and were trained to do. Even as they moved through the woods, their barks and bays were identifiable to owners. They knew which dogs were where in the hierarchy of the chase and were happy to have found a bear right away.

We drove to a side road where they thought we'd be closer, but at almost 2 miles away, we decided to see if the dogs might be able to turn the bear.

They told us jokingly that some bears are afraid of heights — big old bruins who are too big or too tired to climb. These big guys walk along, growling or occasionally swiping at a dog that gets too close. Bennie and Andy's dogs are trained not to try to bite the bear and they've never lost a dog to a bear, but I imagine it could still happen.

The dogs did turn the bear, but now it appeared they were running toward Route 105. Roads of any kind are dangerous for dogs and bears — the loss of trained dogs to traffic is tragic and an escaping bear who ignores the truck coming is just as worrisome.

We drove back to Rte 105 to grab the dogs before they crossed the road, but once again the bear turned. This time it was headed for a swamp. I was already regretting that I hadn't worn rubber boots and was imagining that hip waders might even be necessary. But these folks had seen bears go this way before — to a giant wolfy pine at the



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edge of a swamp. Many a bear had gone up that tree in the past and they knew exactly where it was.

Back we went and closed the distance to 700 yards — a bit more than a 1/4 mile. We grabbed our gear and started tracking.

Before electronic tracking, houndsmen just followed the sound of their dogs, covering many, many miles before they ever caught up — it might take all day to round up the dogs if the bear walked instead of treed.

Before long we spotted the bear 30-40 feet up a huge pine. The trunk of this tree would easily take three or four of us, with arms outstretched, to reach around it. It was on the edge of a swamp; the beavers had been busy and the water was high.

Each dog was leashed and tied. They continued to bay and bark as we circled the tree taking photos of the bear looking down at us. Bennie figured it was 100 lbs or so and probably a 2 1/2-year-old.

They grabbed the dogs and backed off about 50 yards. We watched the bear in the tree, who could still smell, see and hear us. As soon as it realized the dogs were leashed and the people we gone, it shimmied down the tree and wandered off.

I was surprised to see that this bear was not all in a lather, didn't seem stressed, and knew exactly when it was safe to come down. It made me wonder if this bear had been run before.

It was an insightful, interesting and enjoyable event. I was very impressed to see these men and their dogs. Andy said he loves working his dogs work more than he does hunting the bear.

I've had the chance to hunt over a variety of bird dogs. I've met bunny dogs, sheep and cattle dogs and now I can add bear dogs to my list.

It was great and I will be working hard to get some of the legislators, who sponsored House Bill H.410 in 2018, which sought to change, among other things, when houndsmen could train dogs, to go out with these guys. They will have, if nothing else, a broader knowledge base from which to make decisions. I personally hope they change their opinion entirely to be in favor of houndsmen and the work they do keeping bears wild.

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**A Message from the Engaged Outdoorsman**

By Matt Laferriere, Director

Get out and see what the State of VT is doing for you. I went out with a biologist to remote country in the NEK. We spent the day surveying sites that he and his team had constructed.

What are these sites?

Habitat sites for brook trout.

Mr. Kratzer and his team fall trees across brooks which catch debris and create pools. These sites are everywhere. If you're cruising a brook edge and notice a stump with a round marker and a number, you know the state team has been through there, working on habitat.

Don't be lazy, get out and enjoy the work the state has done. Eat some brook trout, leave some others, and have some fun!

**Meet a Director- Ray Bicknell**

**How long have you been involved in the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Conservation Group?**

I've been on this club's Board of Directors since shortly after its inception. At the time I was one of the younger directors. I helped build our fish hatchery and had many good times stocking back country beaver ponds with our trout fry.

**What got you involved?**

Ever since I was a young boy I've loved being in the woods, whether fishing, hunting, or going for a hike.

**What is our biggest challenge moving forward?**

I think that it is important to get young people interested in these pursuits. As people of my generation age, there are fewer young people to replace us. If we are not replaced, there will be no one to truly understand and take care of the wildlands and waterways that I have enjoyed throughout my life.

**On the Way Out**

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

-Theodore Roosevelt, *at Osawatomie, KS 8/31/1910*



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